

Press Release

Zero

Population
Growth**STRICT EMBARGO:****NOT FOR RELEASE UNTIL****WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 1993 -- A.M.****CONTACT: Dianne Sherman****Susan Weber****(202) 332-2200****(202) 332-0556 (home)**

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CHILDREN'S STRESS INDEX RATES COMMUNITIES NATIONWIDE **U.S. Population Pressures Erode Children's Well-Being**

Washington, D.C. -- The well-being of American children is jeopardized by continued U.S. population growth and overconsumption, according to an extensive new study released today by the nonprofit organization Zero Population Growth (ZPG).

The study, the *Children's Stress Index*, ranks a total of 828 U.S. cities, counties and metropolitan areas using 70 population-related social, economic and environmental indicators that affect the lives of children. These indicators are grouped into 10 major categories: population change and crowding; family economics; community economics; maternal and child health; education; crime; air quality; water resources; toxic releases and sewage; and energy and transportation. Each location received a score from 1 (worst) to 10 (best) for each category; these scores were then combined to give each area a final score on a scale of 1 to 100.

The best- and worst-rated locations are as follows:

	<u>Metro Area</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>County</u>
BEST:	Burlington, VT	Overland Park, KS	Chittenden County, VT
	Fargo-Moorhead, ND-MN	Ann Arbor, MI	Eaton County, MI
	Madison, WI	Lincoln, NE	Clay County, MN
WORST:	Houston, TX	Newark, NJ	Harris County, TX
	Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA	Gary, IN	Los Angeles County, CA
	Miami-Hialeah, FL	Cleveland, OH	Dade County, FL

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"The results of the *Index* reflect the reality of the U.S. population problem and its impact on children," comments ZPG executive director Susan Weber. "The *Index* findings show that, in general, the larger the area's population, the greater the stress on its youngest residents. Bigger isn't always better; in fact, it's almost always worse for children."

For instance, the average population of the 25 worst-rated metropolitan areas exceeds 1.8 million -- more than six times the average population of the 25 best-rated areas. Common factors contributing to their poor scores include large population gains and overcrowded living conditions; high rates of unemployment, poverty, and crime; stressed educational and public health infrastructures; and often alarming levels of environmental degradation.

Weber explains that population pressures are often ignored in this country, even though they are intricately linked with the economy, education, health care, a clean environment and children's well-being. By the time a child born today reaches age 60, the nation's population, currently at 257 million, is projected to increase by more than 50 percent -- the equivalent of adding 103 cities the size of New Orleans.

"But our growing numbers are just part of the population equation," adds Weber. "Americans' consumption levels play a large role, too. We produce more waste and consume more natural resources than any other nation. This at a time when communities nationwide are frantically searching for new areas to dispose of their waste, for new sources of water, for new methods to control air pollution and traffic congestion, and for new ways to balance development with environmental quality."

Areas Ranked by Environmental, Geographic and Population Size Factors

Most of the *Index*'s best-rated metro areas -- 17 of the top 25 -- are in the Midwest and New England. The highest-scoring areas tend to be relatively small, with stable populations and low densities. They also share strong ratings for community and family economics; low rates of infant and child mortality; above-average educational and public health infrastructures; and low levels of pollution.

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The worst-rated areas are most often found in the southern and western regions of the United States. In fact, 23 of the *Index's* 25 lowest-scoring metro areas are located in the Sun Belt, primarily in the states of California, Texas and Florida.

The *Index* also lists the 50 best and worst metro areas on the environment, using the average of each area's scores for the four environmental categories: air quality, water resources, toxic releases and sewage, and energy and transportation. On these environmental measures, the top three metro areas are Jacksonville, NC; Burlington, VT; and Tuscaloosa, AL. The bottom three metro areas are Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA; Houston, TX; and Newark, NJ.

Weber explains that four of the *Index's* 10 groups of indicators rate environmental conditions because "a healthy environment is key for healthy kids." She notes that children spend more time outdoors, breathe more air per pound of body weight, and have fewer detoxifying enzymes than adults. And the *Index* shows high levels of environmental stress across the nation, particularly in heavily populated areas: the average population of the 50 worst-rated metro areas for environmental stress is nearly seven times bigger than the average of the 50 best.

Although the ZPG report found a strong correlation between the size of the community and "children's stress," there were some exceptions. For instance, the San Francisco Bay area made the list of the 25 best-rated metro areas. And the Galveston-Texas City metropolitan area -- relatively small with a population of just over 200,000 -- rated among the 25 worst.

Weber urges the Clinton/Gore administration to consider the broad-ranging impacts of population growth. "We need to protect our children and their future by planning for people now. At this point our government is ill-prepared to do so. Not only do we not have a national population policy, we also do not have the capacity to anticipate and avert serious problems generated by population pressures on land, water, air and natural resources, as well as on public health and the economy."

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Concern for America's children goes beyond the realm of compassion or economic and political competitiveness, comments Weber: "It incorporates a vision of a quality future, with an understanding of the broad range of consequences associated with continued population growth. Safe, healthy communities are getting harder and harder to find. Addressing overpopulation -- both our numbers and our consumption -- may be critical to ensuring a high quality of life for present and succeeding generations."

(Children's Stress Index Rankings Attached)

Copies of ZPG's *Children's Stress Index* are available for \$7.50 each (plus \$1.50 postage and handling) from ZPG, 1400 16th St. NW, Suite 320, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 332-2200.

The *Children's Stress Index* is the fourth in a series of "stress tests" from ZPG. In 1985 and 1988, the *Urban Stress Test* rated American cities on 11 population-related indicators. And in 1991, the *Environmental Stress Index* rated American cities on five environmental indicators.

Zero Population Growth (ZPG) is the nation's largest grassroots organization concerned with the environmental, social and economic impacts of overpopulation, both in the United States and worldwide. ZPG advocates voluntary population stabilization through education and empowerment of women, improved public health, and greater access to safe and effective contraceptives and family planning programs.

TOP and BOTTOM CHILDREN'S STRESS INDEX SCORES (100 = best)

The *Children's Stress Index*, published by Zero Population Growth (ZPG), ranks a total of 828 cities, counties and metropolitan areas using 70 indicators that affect the lives of children, and that are related to population factors. These indicators are grouped into 10 major categories: population change and crowding; family economics; community economics; maternal and child health; education; crime; air quality; water resources; toxic releases and sewage; and energy and transportation. Each location received a score from 10 (best) to 1 (worst) for each category; these scores were then combined to give each area a final score on a scale of 1 to 100.

Rank	BEST 25 METRO AREAS	Total Pop.	Score	Rank	WORST 25 METRO AREAS	Total Pop.	Score
1	Burlington, VT	131,000	74.1	239	Houston, TX	3,302,000	32.0
2	Fargo-Moorhead, ND-MN	153,000	67.2	238	Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA	8,863,000	32.1
3	Madison, WI	367,000	65.0	237	Miami-Hialeah, FL	1,937,000	33.2
4	Lincoln, NE	214,000	64.8	236	El Paso, TX	592,000	33.3
5	Stamford, CT	203,000	63.5	235	Fresno, CA	667,000	34.9
6	Champaign-Urbana, IL	173,000	62.4	234	Baton Rouge, LA	528,000	34.9
7	Sioux Falls, SD	124,000	62.0	233	Stockton, CA	481,000	35.1
8	Salem-Gloucester, MA	264,000	61.9	232	Riverside-San Bernardino, CA	2,589,000	35.2
9	Boulder-Longmont, CO	225,000	61.7	231	Vista-Porterville, CA	312,000	36.1
10	Ann Arbor, MI	283,000	61.5	230	Jacksonville, FL	907,000	36.4
11	Poughkeepsie, NY	259,000	61.2	229	Bakersfield, CA	543,000	36.4
12	New London-Norwich, CT-RI	267,000	61.2	228	Lakeland-Winterhaven, FL	405,000	36.6
13	Fort Collins, CO	186,000	61.0	227	New Orleans, LA	1,239,000	36.8
14	Jacksonville, NC	150,000	60.9	226	McAllen-Edinburg, TX	384,000	37.0
15	Springfield, IL	190,000	60.8	225	New York, NY	8,547,000	37.3
16	Portsmouth-Dover, NH-ME	224,000	60.7	224	Galveston-Texas City, TX	217,000	37.5
17	St. Cloud, MN	191,000	60.6	223	Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL	2,068,000	37.7
18	Topeka, KS	161,000	60.3	222	Dallas, TX	2,553,000	37.7
19	Danbury, CT	188,000	60.2	221	Fort Pierce, FL	251,000	38.1
20	Lansing-East Lansing, MI	433,000	60.2	220	Gary-Hammond, IN	605,000	38.3
21	Huntsville, AL	239,000	60.2	219	Ocala, FL	195,000	38.9
22	Santa Rosa-Petaluma, CA	388,000	60.1	218	San Antonio, TX	1,302,000	39.0
23	Cedar Rapids, IA	169,000	59.8	217	Mobile, AL	477,000	39.1
24	Roanoke, VA	224,000	59.6	216	Chicago, IL	6,070,000	39.2
25	San Francisco, CA	1,604,000	59.3	215	Brownsville-Harlingen, TX	260,000	39.3

Rank	BEST 25 CITIES	Total Pop.	Score	Rank	WORST 25 CITIES	Total Pop.	Score
1	Overland Park, KS	112,000	69.4	195	Newark, NJ	275,000	27.4
2	Ann Arbor, MI	110,000	68.1	194	Gary, IN	117,000	29.1
3	Lincoln, NE	192,000	66.4	193	Cleveland, OH	506,000	29.4
4	Madison, WI	191,000	66.0	192	Chicago, IL	2,784,000	29.6
5	Stamford, CT	108,000	64.5	191	Detroit, MI	1,028,000	30.5
6	Lakewood, CO	126,000	64.1	190	Los Angeles, CA	3,485,000	31.4
7	Concord, CA	111,000	64.0	189	Miami, FL	359,000	32.5
8	Huntsville, AL	160,000	63.6	188	East Los Angeles, CA	126,000	33.3
9	Honolulu, HI	365,000	63.3	187	Houston, TX	1,631,000	33.3
10	Alexandria, VA	111,000	63.1	186	Fresno, CA	354,000	33.7
11	Eugene, OR	113,000	63.0	185	Pomona, CA	132,000	33.7
12	Berkeley, CA	103,000	62.7	184	Tampa, FL	280,000	34.0
13	Livonia, MI	101,000	61.8	183	Philadelphia, PA	1,586,000	34.2
14	Stirling Heights, MI	116,000	61.2	182	Moreno Valley, CA	119,000	34.4
15	Fremont, CA	173,000	61.2	181	El Paso, TX	515,000	35.0
16	Santa Rosa, CA	113,000	61.0	180	Stockton, CA	211,000	35.2
17	Virginia Beach, VA	393,000	60.0	179	Sacramento, CA	369,000	35.6
18	Sunnyvale, CA	117,000	59.9	178	San Bernardino, CA	164,000	35.9
19	Hampton, VA	134,000	59.8	177	St. Louis, MO	397,000	36.2
20	Cedar Rapids, IA	109,000	59.5	176	Hialeah, FL	188,000	36.3
21	Albany, NY	101,000	59.1	175	Dallas, TX	1,007,000	36.3
22	Huntington Beach, CA	182,000	58.9	174	El Monte, CA	106,000	36.6
23	Aurora, CO	222,000	58.7	173	Fort Worth, TX	448,000	36.7
24	Lexington, KY	225,000	58.5	172	Phoenix, AZ	983,000	36.8
25	Topeka, KS	120,000	58.4	171	New York, NY	7,323,000	36.9

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Rank	BEST 25 COUNTIES	Total Pop.	Score
1	Chittenden County, VT	125,000	74.8
2	Essex County, MI	93,000	71.0
3	Clay County, MN	50,000	70.8
4	Marin County, CA	230,000	70.4
5	Madison County, NY	69,000	70.2
6	Putnam County, NY	84,000	70.0
7	Ontario County, NY	95,000	69.8
8	Ozaukee County, WI	73,000	69.6
9	Roanoke County, VA	79,000	69.4
10	Clinton County, MI	58,000	69.3
11	Tolland County, CT	107,000	69.1
12	Sarpy County, NE	103,000	68.6
13	Payette County, ID	62,000	68.5
14	Cass County, ND	103,000	68.1
15	Tioga County, NY	52,000	67.8
16	St. Croix County, WI	50,000	67.5
17	Hardiner County, NY	66,000	67.4
18	Montgomery County, NY	52,000	67.3
19	Douglas County, CO	60,000	66.8
20	Leavenworth County, KS	64,000	66.8
21	Pairfax County, VA	819,000	66.5
22	Cumberland County, PA	195,000	66.3
23	Hamilton County, IN	109,000	66.2
24	Schenectady County, NY	149,000	66.2
25	Stafford County, VA	61,000	66.0

Rank	WORST 25 COUNTIES	Total Pop.	Score
493	Harris County, TX	2,818,000	32.0
492	Los Angeles County, CA	8,883,000	32.1
491	Dade County, FL	1,987,000	33.2
490	El Paso County, TX	592,000	33.3
489	Broax Borough, NY	1,204,000	33.6
488	Wayne County, MI	2,112,000	34.1
487	Philadelphia County, PA	1,386,000	34.2
486	Fresno County, CA	657,000	34.9
485	San Joaquin County, CA	481,000	35.1
484	Hillsborough County, FL	834,900	35.4
483	Brooklyn Borough, NY	2,301,000	35.5
482	Lake County, IN	476,000	35.8
481	Essex County, NJ	778,000	36.1
480	Tulare County, CA	312,000	36.1
479	Kern County, CA	543,000	36.4
478	Cook County, IL	5,105,000	36.5
477	Polk County, FL	405,000	36.6
476	Dallas County, TX	1,853,000	37.0
475	Hidalgo County, TX	384,000	37.0
474	Duval County, FL	673,000	37.1
473	Riverside County, CA	1,170,000	37.2
472	Galveston County, TX	217,000	37.5
471	San Bernardino County, CA	1,418,000	37.6
470	East Baton Rouge Parish, LA	380,000	38.2
469	St. Lucia County, FL	150,000	38.3

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